Turkey and the Arab spring:
’neo-Ottomanism’ or role model?

Monday 6th of February 5.30 P.M.

Gellner Room (103), Monument Building

Turkey has been held up as the role model for the new regimes of the Arab world. This is based on the belief that she is the only predominantly Muslim country with a viable democratic process, an apparently booming economy, and a charismatic leader, Tayyip Erdogan, originating from a moderately Islamist party, who has become a major player in world politics. When Erdoğan visited Egypt on 13 September 2011 he was given a rock star reception by thousands. He was even billed by one Arab journalist as “The Arab World’s New Pasha”.

There are also concerns that Turkey’s new self confidence can turn into “neo-Ottomanism”, meaning an increasing tendency to throw its weight around in a region it once ruled. There is no doubt that one of the main factors causing Turkey to look inwards and reaffirm its connection to its Ottoman past is the ever weakening prospect of EU accession. Most people in Turkey now feel that the EU is acting in bad faith and will never admit Turkey it is simply too big and too Islamic. Turkey is indeed experiencing a marked nostalgia for its Ottoman past, but to what extent is this actually influencing policy? The talk will examine some of the more recent aspects of these developments.

Professor Selim Deringil is currently Professor of History in the History Department at Bosphorus University, Istanbul, Turkey. His interests are in cultural and intellectual history and he is currently involved in research on religious conversion and apostasy in the late Ottoman Empire. His interests are teaching and research on comparative themes in Ottoman/European history. He has written and taught such topics as citizenship, the relationship of religion and nationalism, nomadism and modernity, the occult in Muslim and Christian societies, and piracy in the Mediterranean.

He has held various teaching positions in the US, Britain, Israel and France. He has published in Turkish, English, French, Greek and Japanese.

A reception will follow